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**Ya. A. Fedorenko****LIBERALIZATION OF UKRAINIAN PEASANTS' LIFE  
DURING THE KHRUSHCHEV'S THAW (1954–1964)**

*The process of liberalization in Ukrainian village during 1954–1964 is analyzed in the article. The main attention is paid to the improvement of Ukrainian peasants' financial status, in particular, changes in the attitude of the governing bodies to the system of salaries of farmers, their pensions etc. The state of social welfare of the residents is also described and the problem of staffing of rural areas is paid attention to.*

**Keywords:** *Ukrainian village, the Khrushchev's thaw, total return, staffing.*

The current priority areas of our country's internal and foreign policy are marked by the striving of the power, while adopting the best practices, to turn Ukraine into a politically stable, economically sound and culturally democratic state. In order to accomplish this task, a series of radical reforms of virtually all aspects of life not only of the urban population but especially of the peasants of Ukrainian villages, including raising their material and spiritual culture, was initiated. Successful completion of these tasks requires generalization and consideration of patterns, trends and principles of experience of previous generations. Modern Ukrainian historical science is developing in the direction of integration into the world humanitarian space. In addition, an objective analysis of historical experience not only helps solve contemporary problems, but also determines the dominant political, economic, cultural landmarks of the further development of the state.

The period of the Khrushchev's Thaw is of particular interest for this reason because despite its half-character (the restoration of the facade of dominant ideology by the process of de-Stalinization should have served as a means of restraining the communist system with its political structure and ideological postulates) was the time of profound changes in Ukrainian village life, the time of reduction of inclusive fear, rigid ideological scrutiny, the cessation of mass terror, and the increased attention of the Soviet leadership to rural development issues.

In our opinion, only an unbiased objective analysis of virtually all periods of the country's historical development will help to avoid many mistakes when looking for the most optimal ways to implement modern socio-economic reforms into the life of the Ukrainian population, and to predict the consequences of their impact on the life of every citizen of Ukraine. Therefore, the topic is relevant and needs thorough research.

The period of the Khrushchev's Thaw is the subject of research of many domestic scientists. For example, contemporary authors, such as L.V. Kovpak, O.V. Tievikova, and M.V. Kagal'na, are open to questions related to our topic.

The purpose of the article is to investigate the process of liberalization of the life of Ukrainian peasants during the Khrushchev Thaw on the basis of the analysis of the material, using the latest principles and methods of scientific and historical knowledge.

The process of de-Stalinization of social life in the USSR was very slow. It was only in summer of 1956 that the articles did appear in the Ukrainian press where the decision of the 20th CPSU Congress was interpreted. Although it is worth noting that the tone and content of the criticism, in general, were restrained, which, in general, was consistent with the spirit of that era.

Subsequently, the Ukrainian village felt liberalization, too. The state of agriculture was catastrophic due to Stalin's policies. The loud statements of the "father of the people" and his entourage about the dizzying successes in agriculture distorted the real situation and were simply mockery of common sense. The agricultural tax was twice increased in the postwar years (in 1948 and in 1952) and the peasantry was not able to pay it (in 1952 the planned tax of 40 billion rubles was not even fully collected due to the deplorable situation of the village).

The new head of the mega-state needed to address the painful problems of the countryside as quickly as possible. Therefore, in September 1953, a plenum of the CPSU Central Committee was held and the decree «On Measures for the Further Development of Agriculture of the USSR» was adopted, which became the starting point for solving many painful issues related to the development of agriculture.

One of the urgent tasks that needed to be quickly resolved was the violation of the principle of material interest of collective farms and collective farmers themselves [1, 12]. In other words, it was the first time during the Soviet era that the fiscal nature of the state's attitude to the peasantry was recognized. After all, the size of the tax on the farms was determined not depending on the actual income derived from the livestock kept and harvested at the personal plot of the crop, but the profit that could be obtained to the taxmen's mind. Therefore, the tax was unduly burdensome for the peasants. This led to a decrease in the number of livestock in personal property, a decrease in the productivity of the farmland, and had a very negative impact on the total agricultural production in the country. Reduction of the monetary tax, restoration of firm rates of taxation in accordance with the sizes of farmsteads allowed peasants to look more optimistically in the future.

The revival of the countryside was facilitated by the subsequent policy of Khrushchev. During his first five years in power, the Ukrainian village used twice as much money as in all previous years of Soviet power [2, 10]. In addition, government procurement prices for grain and livestock products increased and previous debt was written off from collective farms. The issue of salaries of collective farmers was also revised. If during previous years the peasant had to work workdays, since 1957 a monthly pay had been introduced in the USSR. To implement this, a transitional fund of 100 thousand rubles and 1 thousand quintals of grain was organized by the authorities. On average, a collective farmer received 2.5 kg of grain and 3 rubles for each workday – scanty, but still a salary [3, 148].

During the period of the Khrushchev's Thaw the pension provision of farmers was significantly improved. Like most social payments, pensions depended on the collective farm, its economic status, and the manner in which they were assigned to each item. They were counted on the collective farm meeting. At the expense of some of the profits of the collective farm a special fund to deal with the assistance to the disabled farmers was created. In 1955, there were already 14,000 collective farms in Ukraine, which constituted 4/5 collective farms of the USSR [4, 151]. By the end of 1964 peasants' pension was 12 rubles.

In addition to cash payments, these funds also helped with natural products: grain, vegetables, meat. They had to provide sanatoriums for treatment and provision of handicapped people with medical supplies (dentures, wheelchairs, crutches, etc.).

However, it should be noted that the system of collective-farm assistance during the Thaw – period was still not perfect – the funds provided to those who needed them were very low, especially when it came to payments to orphans and mothers. In addition, the collective farms themselves, due to lack of funds, limited this duty.

Gradually and very slowly, starting from the mid-1950s, the total income of the rural population, which consisted of all income from the collective farm, net production from the private subsidiary economy, all income from work in state cooperative and public enterprises, and state revenues in the form pensions, etc. began to grow.

The largest part of the income of peasants, was the profit received from the collective farm (about 52.4 %) and from private subsidiary farming (in 1955 its share was 35.7 %, in 1959 – 38.1 % of the total return of all income) [5, 26].

Thus, during 1954–1964 the income level of peasant families increased significantly. However, this increasing did not automatically improve the standard of living of peasantry, because the structure of the expenditure part of the budget, the level of consumption of food and industrial products is of great importance. The major expenditures of a collective farm family were on production needs: the purchase of cattle, bees, poultry etc. Each year, 5–10% of the family budget was allocated. A private farm met almost all of the family's needs for potatoes, vegetables, meat, milk, eggs. At the same time, collective farms, in which the collective farmers received 85–99% of their annual grain demand during the working hours, remained the main source of grain.

During the studied period, many socio-economic problems remained unresolved. This was especially true about the issue of the peasants' personal housing and the comfort of their existence. According to O.V. Tievikova, these were the details, which prove the state's negligent attitude towards the needs of its citizens [6, 55]. At the beginning of the Thaw period, most of the rural residents were forced to live in poorly adapted premises – barns, tubs, religious buildings, dugouts, etc. It was impossible to build new ones because of lack of money. The situation improved in the early 1960s, when, as a result of the above-mentioned total

return, peasants could already afford to build new housing. However, these were homes with minimum conveniences.

In the Ukrainian village of the period under study, inadequate social, medical and transport services to the population, as well as providing the villagers with recreational leisure, remained a painful problem. It was due to a catastrophic shortage of skilled personnel – there were very few specialists with secondary vocational education in the villages, and only a few with higher education. As an example, even in the mid-1950s, rural clubs and libraries were led by people whose educational and professional levels were rather low. As of January 1, 1958, there were poor-educated 964 people employed in the villages of the Ukrainian SSR (925 headed village clubs, 39 libraries).

Only the agricultural sector was more or less prosperous. Thus, during the period of Thaw, the number of skilled specialists in Ukrainian villages working in collective farms increased by 42%, in subsidiary agricultural enterprises – by 45 %, in agricultural service organizations – by 36%, and in state farms by 2 times [7, 8]. This was facilitated by a joint resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR in 1962 "On Enhancing the Role of Agronomists, Zootechnicians and Other Specialists of Agricultural Collective and State Farm Production", on the recommendation of which collective farms were to pay these specialists the salary in the amount of 80–90% of the fixed official salary of the collective farm head.

Although the local regulations were implemented only partially (in Cherkasy region the actual salary was 66 % of the fixed official salary of the head of the collective farm), this policy was successful – by the end of 1964 the countryside was replenished with a large number of agronomists, zootechnicians and other specialists in various agricultural production sectors. 8.2 thousand of agronomists, zootechnicians, veterinarians, veterinary paramedics – 15.7 thousand people – were sent to the collective farms [7, 9–10].

Regarding medical care, a shortage of qualified medical staff was constantly felt in the villages of Ukraine between 1954 and 1964. In total, there were 7 doctors per 100,000 inhabitants in rural areas, while in the cities – 39 [8, 74]. Insufficient network of medical facilities, lack of doctors did not allow to fully provide effective medical care to the rural population. In the early 1960s, there weren't enough specialists in rural medical facilities; moreover, about 13 % of doctors did not have needed level of education. Among paramedics, nurses, midwives there was a significant percentage of trainees, workers without completed secondary medical education.

Undermanning of rural outpatient clinics by doctors, induced turnover of qualified medical practitioners for nursing staff led to queues for appointments, as well as inadequate care for patients.

The authorities approached the problem of staffing countryside with skilled workers of cultural and educational institutions in the same way. To succeed, the Council of Ministers of the USSR turned them into a privileged category by issuing a decree «On the Establishment of Free Utilities for Cultural and Educational

Personnel of the USSR», according to which within three months there was approved a plan of housing in villages for cultural and educational sphere employees, wood cutting areas were to be allocated for the construction of residential buildings and in the plans there had to be obligatory envisaged the distribution of fuel and the organization of its delivery to their place of residence [9, 149–150]. This resolution was quite effective – the work of a cultural and educational sphere employee began to attract many graduates from both rural and urban cultural institutions.

Thus, coming to the helm of power, Khrushchev brought significant changes in society. While in the early 1950s the village was in a very difficult situation, then in the mid-1960s peasants began to look more confidently into the future. Unlike his predecessor, Khrushchev was much more concerned with the problems of the countryside. In particular, the state revised the issue of salaries of collective farmers, introduced a monthly salary.

In order to facilitate the life of the rural population, a monetary tax was reduced and firm tax rates were restored in accordance with the size of the farms. These measures made it possible to revive and strengthen private farms. The total return of the rural population started to grow very slowly, although even at the end of the Thaw period it remained very low. And to improve the living conditions of the disabled rural population, 14,000 collective farms were organized throughout the USSR, providing both cash payments and assistance with natural products.

The personnel situation in Ukraine has gradually improving. In particular, the share of rural intellectuals (cultural and educational workers) and agricultural specialists (agronomists, veterinarians, zootechnicians) significantly increased. These categories received a number of benefits that began to attract urban high school graduates to the countryside. However, despite these positive changes, in 1964 the so-called «skilled labor shortage» was still felt, especially for such a specialty as a village doctor.

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**Я. А. Федоренко****Лібералізація життя українських селян в період хрущовської «відлиги» (1954–1964 рр.)**

У статті аналізується процес лібералізації життя в українському селі протягом 1954–1964 рр. Основна увага звертається на поліпшення матеріального стану українських селян, зокрема, зміни ставлення керівництва на систему оплати праці колгоспників, їх пенсійного забезпечення тощо. Також охарактеризовано стан соціально-побутового забезпечення мешканців та звернено увагу на проблему кадрового забезпечення сільської місцевості.

**Ключові слова:** українське село, хрущовська «відлига», сукупний прибуток, кадрове забезпечення.

**Я. А. Федоренко****Либерализация жизни украинских крестьян в период хрущевской «оттепели» (1954–1964 гг.)**

В статье анализируется процесс либерализации жизни в украинском селе в течение 1954–1964 гг. Основное внимание обращается на улучшение материального положения украинских крестьян, в частности, на изменение отношения руководства к системе оплаты труда колхозников, их пенсионного обеспечения и тому подобное. Также дана характеристика состояния социально-бытового обеспечения жителей и обращено внимание на проблему кадрового обеспечения сельской местности.

**Ключевые слова:** украинское село, хрущевская «оттепель», совокупный доход, кадровое обеспечение